

Americans about Cushing's, its symptoms and treatment options, is an opportunity to save lives.

TRIBUTE TO UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS STAFF SERGEANT DENNIS W. HAMMOND

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 2004

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to United States Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Dennis W. Hammond who was captured by the Viet Cong on February 8, 1968 and died in a Prisoner of War camp in March, 1970. Staff Sergeant Hammond was one of several American POWs who were held at a camp in Quang Nam Province numbered ST18. He attempted escape with the other POWs in the spring of 1968 and was shot in the leg by Montagnards in a nearby village. After 36 long years, the Department of Defense has positively identified Staff Sergeant Hammond's remains and will lay him to rest with full military honors in Bremond, Texas on May 22, 2004.

Staff Sergeant Hammond's story was brought to my attention by a patriotic and thoughtful newspaper reporter for the Gloucester County Times named Jim Six. Mr. Six has collected more than 400 dog tags from Vietnam and has spent over ten years trying to return these identification tags to their rightful owner or next of kin. As part of this statement, I am submitting three columns published by Jim Six to be included as part of the RECORD.

[From the Gloucester County Times, Feb. 4, 2004]

MARINE'S LENGTHY JOURNEY NEARS END

(By Jim Six)

They found him! After 36 years, U.S. Marine Sgt. Dennis Wayne Hammond is on his way home from Vietnam.

You may remember a story I wrote back in 2001. I have more than 400 dog tags that I gave a friend a hundred bucks to buy from a street vender in Vietnam in 1993. The dog tags may or may not have belonged to American servicemen. The jury is still out on that.

But one of the dog tags matched a real person.

Denny Hammond was captured by the Viet Cong on Feb. 8, 1968, almost exactly 36 years ago. He was shot trying to escape and never quite recovered. By March 1970, the once-strapping Marine weighed about 89 pounds. He died, some say, while reciting the military oath of allegiance.

Previous efforts by the U.S. government to find Denny's body had been unsuccessful. In 1995, a former POW who had helped bury Denny was able to lead searchers to the grave, but it was empty.

On Jan. 20, 2001, in Mexia, Texas, I handed Carlene Tackitt a dog tag bearing the name of her brother, Denny Hammond. Carlene's mother, Opal, had died in 1981, out of her mind with grief for the son who had been captured in the jungles of Vietnam. Before Carlene's dad died, he said it was probably the not knowing that had killed Opal, the not knowing where her boy was.

My visit to Mexia was brief, just long enough to be the recipient of Carlene's Texas hospitality and to hand her a donated jewelry box containing that old dog tag.

She clasped that little piece of metal tightly, not wanting to let go of something

that might have been her brother's. "Keep that next to me . . . I ain't never giving that up," Carlene said back then. "You don't know how much we appreciate this. You have no idea."

The story about the dog tag and the man it might have belonged to was probably one of the most important things I have written. Denny Hammond, for some reason, became part of my life. I have a POW bracelet with his name on it. His high school graduation picture is somewhere on my desk at home. I have an ancient arrowhead Denny's nephew gave me. I think about Denny Hammond a lot.

Last week, Carlene Tackitt was notified by the government that her brother's remains had been located and were now in Hawaii. I got the news Sunday in an e-mail from Carlene's daughter-in-law. "We wanted you to know this because you had played a part in finding a piece of him and thought you might want to know how his story ends finally . . . his family has gotten the peace we need." When I got the news, I cried, then wanted to smoke a cigar, drink some champagne, dance, sing. I hope to talk to Carlene soon. Dennis Wayne Hammond's long journey is almost at an end. He will be buried in Texas, next to his mother and father, sometime in March. Boy, I'd like to be there for that.

[From the Gloucester County Times, Apr. 6, 2004]

MARINE'S JOURNEY HOME NEARS END

(By Jim Six)

The U.S. contacted Carlene Tackitt earlier this year to tell her they finally had her brother's remains. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Dennis W. Hammond was captured by the Viet Cong on Feb. 8, 1968 and died in a Prisoner of War camp in March, 1970.

I've been anxiously awaiting news of how they finally found Denny's remains. As it turns out, the U.S. may have had Denny's remains for almost 20 years.

A team went to Carlene's house in Mexia, Texas, Saturday—a full-dress Marine, a DNA expert, someone from mortuary services. Carlene chose to bury her brother in Bremond, Texas, rather than Arlington, because Bremond is where his parents, Opal and Ernest, are buried.

Having given Carlene what we think was her brother's dog tag in January, 2001, it was pretty exciting news when I got word on Feb. 1 that they'd identified Denny's body. I thought he might have been one of four GIs whose remains had been found in north central Vietnam in mid-January. It seems I was wrong about that.

"Daddy was probably right," Carlene said when she called me Monday. Back in 1985, the government believed they had found Denny's body. Somebody changed their mind, though, and announced the remains they had found were really too small to be those of a Caucasian and were probably those of a Montagnard tribesman. Carlene's father didn't quite buy that story and thought those remains probably really were his son's.

Finally, modern technology caught up with Dennis Hammond. Carlene gave the government a DNA sample two years ago. Recently, they told her Saturday, they started rechecking more than 860 boxes of remains from Vietnam. They showed her a picture of bones they believe are her brother's. They made a DNA match through a tooth.

Carlene signed a paper Saturday saying she accepts the proof and believes these particular remains are those of her brother, Dennis.

When I wrote about this in February, several people contacted me immediately to offer to pay my way to the funeral. Others,

when it appeared Carlene might be responsible for some costs of a funeral in Texas, agreed to make up any difference. I'll let you know later who those folks are. She's asking the government to pay for an airplane ticket so her other brother, Willie, can make it out to Bremond from Detroit for the funeral. Carlene's the oldest. Willie is next. Denny was the baby—he was only 23 when he died in the jungles of Vietnam.

When she sets the date, a Marine will be assigned to guard Dennis Hammond's casket 24 hours a day as it travels from Hawaii to Bremond, Texas. There will be a full-tilt military funeral, complete with 21-gun salute.

My pal, Gene Lillie, himself a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran, has already mailed Carlene his POW bracelet that bears Denny's name. I'm still wearing mine. I figure I'll give it to Carlene in person—at the funeral.

I plan to be there when Dennis Hammond's long journey home finally ends.

[From the Gloucester County Times, Apr. 20, 2004]

MARINE'S CHARISMA TOUCHING MANY

(By Jim Six)

How does a Marine who died in Vietnam more than 34 years ago wind up affecting the lives of so many people, many of whom never knew him in life? It's a mystery, so far.

On Saturday, May 22, I'll be attending the funeral of Dennis W. Hammond, a Texas boy by way of Detroit who joined the Marines, served two tours in Vietnam, was captured by the Vietcong in 1968 and died in a POW camp in 1970.

I got drawn into his life, and death, when I was able to present one of his dog tags to his sister, Carlene Tackitt, in Mexia, Texas in 2001. Dennis' parents, Ernest and Opal, are buried nearby in Bremond, Texas. After all these years, Dennis is coming home. His remains—possibly found in the mid to late 1980s but only recently identified thanks to DNA testing—will be returned to Texas.

Mike "Tiny" Readinger served with Dennis in 1968 in a Combined Action Program unit that lived and worked among the Vietnamese. Dennis was ending his second tour in the country, had just a couple weeks left until he'd go home.

Dennis went out with a hastily assembled rescue team to help an ambushed unit. They were overrun by something like 300 Vietcong fighters. Most were killed, only one or two escaped and a couple, including Dennis, were captured.

Dennis tried to escape, got shot, was beaten and nearly starved by his captors. In March 1970, he died, weighing something like 89 pounds. They say he was reciting the military oath of allegiance, more probably the military Code of Conduct, when he died.

Mike found out about Dennis' recovery only a few days ago. His voice cracks when he tells about starting to read the e-mail. He had to get up and go out into his backyard for a while before getting his wife to read the rest of the message. He read it several times after that.

Andy Anderson is a school teacher in Fort Worth who "adopted" Dennis Hammond after getting a POW bracelet bearing his name. Anderson is so involved with Dennis, he has had his students write about the POW every year on Feb. 8. Anderson usually felt quite depressed on Feb. 8 each year. This year, he didn't and, in retrospect, wonders whether he subconsciously knew Dennis Hammond had been found and was on his way home.

Marty Eddy spent 17 years heading the Michigan POW/MIA Committee and, because Dennis had enlisted in Detroit, has followed his amazing story. She never met Dennis,

but has a friend who went through boot camp with Hammond.

Now comes the funeral. We'll all meet—his sister from Texas, his brother from Detroit, the comrade-in-arms from Indiana, the teacher from Fort Worth, the woman and boot camp pal from Michigan, the journalist from Gloucester County.

Maybe then I'll find a clue to this incredible mystery, to the charisma of this remarkable hero who died never knowing how much he'd affect lives of family, friends and complete strangers.

TRIBUTE TO DR. TYREE WEIDER

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 2004

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Tyree Weider who is celebrating her 10th anniversary as President of Los Angeles Valley College. She is a remarkable woman whose accomplishments are extraordinary.

Dr. Weider was raised in South Central Los Angeles. She attended local public schools and began her career path as a student at Compton Community College. She completed her Bachelor's degree in sociology at California State University Northridge and earned a Master's degree in Educational Psychology. A few years later, she received her Doctorate degree in Higher Education Administration from the University of California Los Angeles.

Early in her career, Dr. Weider worked as an Employment Counselor for the State Employment Service in Compton, South Central Los Angeles, and Pacoima. She also worked as a therapist in adult outpatient mental health. She then moved to Los Angeles Mission College to serve as Dean of Student Affairs and was later appointed Dean of Academic Affairs. She was then selected as the Director of Educational Programs for the Los Angeles Community College District. In 1989, she began working at Los Angeles Valley College as the Vice President of Academic Affairs. In 1995, Dr. Weider became the President of the College.

Since becoming President, Dr. Weider has taken significant steps to revitalize the campus to benefit students and the community at large. Under her guidance, the college has begun developing plans for the construction of five new educational buildings and major renovations to several campus facilities. Dr. Weider has also forged innovative partnerships with various businesses and organizations in the community to provide students an opportunity to perform community outreach and become involved in public service.

Over the years, Dr. Weider has proven to be a tireless leader for numerous community-based agencies and organizations. For example, she is currently a member of the California Community College CEO Board of Directors and a member of the advisory committee of the Auto Club of Southern California. She has also served on the Board of Directors for Northridge Hospital Medical Center, Universal City Tomorrow, the Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley, Catholic Healthcare West and Temple Ahavat Shalom.

Dr. Weider's hard work and leadership deserves acknowledgement. Recently she re-

ceived the 2004 Pioneer Women Award. In March 2002, she was recognized as one of the most outstanding residents in the San Fernando Valley. In 1998, the Speaker of the Assembly bestowed upon her the San Fernando Valley's Woman of the Year Award. Her achievements are legion and recognition is well deserved.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring and congratulating Dr. Weider for all of her wonderful accomplishments and her unyielding commitment to education and public service.

COMMEMORATION OF THE 89TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 2004

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 89th anniversary of one of history's most terrible tragedies, the Armenian Genocide.

On April 24, 1915, 300 Armenian leaders, intellectuals and professionals were rounded up in Constantinople, deported and killed, under orders from the Young Turk government. This was the beginning of a campaign of terror resulting in the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians and the deportation of more than 500,000.

The government of the Ottoman Empire justified this policy by claiming it was necessary to suppress revolts being launched by Armenians as a consequence of the ongoing military operations of World War I. This assertion was patently denied by survivors and witnesses. United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau reported at that time, "Deportation of and excesses against peaceful Armenians is increasing and from harrowing reports of eyewitnesses it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion."

Not content with perpetrating this atrocity, the Young Turks denied a genocide had taken place. Generations have since been raised denying this tragedy. Such denials are refuted by the archival documents and first-hand accounts found in such recent scholarly works as Peter Balakian's *The Burning Tigris* and Samantha Power's *A Problem From Hell*. Director Atom Egoyan presented the horror of the siege of Van in his film *Ararat*, which was based, in part, on the memoirs of Clarence Ussher, an American physician and missionary working in Turkey at the time.

In Detroit and its surrounding suburbs live one of the largest Armenian-American communities in the United States, many of whom are the children and grandchildren of survivors or actual survivors themselves. This weekend, I will be attending a commemoration ceremony at St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield, Michigan, in which some of these individuals will be in attendance. To those who suggest that this ruthless genocide of a people and culture did not happen, I ask, what further testimony could the world possibly want?

Mr. Speaker, for myself and my constituents, I rise today to urge those who deny this genocide to accept it as fact. Only then can

we move forward and stop these atrocities from repeating themselves over and over again.

H.R. 1799—THE GUARDSMEN AND RESERVISTS FINANCIAL RELIEF ACT OF 2003

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 2004

Ms. SANCHEZ of California. I would like to express my strong support for H.R. 1799, the Guardsmen and Reservists Financial Relief Act of 2003. This bill would allow penalty-free withdrawals from retirement plans during the period that a military reservist or national guardsman is called to active duty for an extended period.

It is now more important than ever to work to mitigate the financial hardship we are placing on our reservists. At the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, both the White House and Department of Defense spoke of swiftly achieving victory in Iraq and bringing our servicemembers home within a few short months.

Despite the valorous efforts of our military personnel, it is clear that we are facing a very different picture. According to DOD, stabilizing and ultimately winning the peace in Iraq will require the mobilization of at least 100,000 to 150,000 reserve component personnel annually for the next several years. Reserve component personnel comprise nearly 40 percent of our current force, whereas they only comprised 2.0 percent of the initial force used in the invasion.

In light of the tragic upsurge in violence over the last month, 20,000 soldiers recently learned that their year-long deployments to Iraq had been extended for an additional 3 months. Nearly one-fourth are reservists.

It is apparent that our success in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the broader war on terrorism, is dependent on the continued commitment of our reservists. And I don't think we are doing enough right now to ensure that they are being adequately compensated for their sacrifice.

According to GAO, nearly 41 percent of reservists are impacted by a pay discrepancy between his or her military and civilian salary. This is taking its toll. Not only are families racking up credit card debt, falling behind on bills, and losing businesses, but many are grappling with not re-enlisting when their service is up.

And the fear of financial hardship may be hurting recruiting efforts. In 2003, every active and reserve component achieved its recruiting goals except the Army National Guard, which fell short of its recruiting goal by 7,798 (12.6 percent).

We must begin to alleviate the financial burden on reservists, and I believe this bill is an important step in the right direction. However, it is not enough. Simply allowing our reservists to raid their retirement is not the answer.

We must provide better re-enlistment bonuses, we must secure the extension of TRICARE benefits, we must secure the continuation of hazardous duty pay and family separation allowance, and we must continue to push for pay raises for our military families.